MUKTA CARITA
(The Pearl Story)

By Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī

Obeisances to the son of Gopendra Nanda, Who enchants the world with His lila, whose complexion is like a blooing blue lotus and who is as beautiful as millions of Cupids.

Obeisances to the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, who are immersed in the ocean of playful buying and selling of pearls, and Who are eager to defeat each other.

I worship that full moon that rose from the womb of Mother Saci to distribute the nectar of His own loving devotional service on earth.

I bow down to my spiritual master, who gave me the holy name, the son of Mother Saci, Svarupa Damodara, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and his older brother, Śrīla Sanātana Goswāmī, the great abode of Mathura and the pastures of Vraja, Rādhākunda, Govardhana Hill, and the hope of attaining Radhika and Madhava, by his grace.

The ocean of Vṛndāvana is filled with waves of the nectarean pastimes of Lord Hari. I bow down to the most blissful devotees who dwell there.

One day, after having heard something about this, Satyabhāma eagerly asked Kṛṣṇa: “From where have these sweet vines, from whose pearls my bangles were made, come from, O Lord?” Kṛṣṇa, remembering the story, became slightly afflicted within, but joyful without and said: “There was a time when pearls grew on vines! Now they are kept in oysters.”

Satyabhāma became curious after hearing this and repeatedly encouraged Kṛṣṇa to tell her more. Kṛṣṇa then said: “One day in the month of Kartikka there was a Dipavali festival in Gokula, near Govardhana. Everyone there was busily engaged in preparing all the paraphenalia for this. The cowherdsmen were especially absorbed in decorating their cows and pets and the gopis were decorating themselves in their dressingrooms with different ornaments.

“Śrīmati Rādhārāni was decorating Herself with Her sakhis with the best pearls in a pavilion by the bank of Malyahari kunda (near Rādhākunda). I eagerly went there when I heard this from my pet parrot, who is justly named Vicakṣana (clever), to beg some pearls from them, as I was eager to decorate My cows Haṁsi and Harini with them.

“But they were very clever and just looked at Me with disdain from the corners of their lotus-blue eyes, like sages with half-closed eyes. When I saw this I told them: ‘O

you mountains of pride, coming forth from attaining the valuable touchstone of youthful beauty! Will you not even lend an ear to the request of your dear friend?' Hearing this, the lively Lalita, smiling at her friends, said with feigned anger : 'O upstart! Why are You wasting Your time asking for pearls that are fit only for great queens?'

"Hearing this, I curiously replied: 'O, if you don't give Me some pearls for decorating the four horns of my two most dear cows, then their decoration cannot be completed. Where else will I get pearls?'

"Lalita replied: 'O Kṛṣṇa, there is not even one pearl good enough for Your cows!' Hearing this I said: 'O, most talkative Lalita! Just wait, you miser! I will get pearls from My mother Vrajeśvari and plant them in a field! Then I will have more pearls than you!'

"When I went to My mother with this request, she said: 'Silly boy, pearls don't grow in fields.' But I assured her: 'You will see. Within three days My pearl vine will sprout!' So she gave Me some pearls and I planted them in a field by the Jalaharana-ghata with three friends helping Me to fence the place off. Then for the sake of avenging Myself for their refusal to give Me pearls I had one friend go to them to ask for milk to water the pearl seeds, but they said: 'How can you grow pearls in a field and nourish them with milk? We only give milk to our cows. We are not obliged to grow pearl vines with milk to decorate Kṛṣṇa's cows!'

"Then I took milk from our own goshalla — lots of it — and sprinkled my pearls with it every day. Then on the fourth day the vines came out. I was in ecstasy and I pulled at My mother's dress to show her the sprouting pearl plants. She was amazed and thought to herself: 'What is this?' She went back home and told all the cowherds, who, after hearing about it, all came there to see. They thought the area was just full of thorns, so they climbed a nearby Kadamba tree to look over the fence.

"They were amazed when they saw the beautiful vines, full of honeybees intoxicated by the wonderful fragrance. The gopis were also amazed to see the beautiful flowers growing from the vines. Eight types of pearls had grown on My vines, and they were all most charming.

"When the gopis saw all this they became greedy for pearls and consulted their counsellor: 'O friend, now Kṛṣṇa will surely not give us any pearls. Why don't we plough a field twice as big as Kṛṣṇa's and grow our own pearls there?' Hearing this, Lalita said: 'O gopis, are you afflicted with disturbed lifeairs? Everyone in Vṛndāvana knows that Kṛṣṇa knows a lot of amazing mantras through which He was able to do things like lift Govardhana Hill. What is so wonderful for him to grow a pearl vine? That very delicate blue lotus that grew from the pond of the womb of Mother Yaśodā must have some special power to do these things.'

“Then Tungavidya said: ‘Why don’t we ask Nandimukhi, the pupil of Mother Paurnamasi, if she is also initiated in such mantras.’ All the gopis said: ‘Well spoken Tungavidya!’ and they went to Nandimukhi to tell her of their plan. ‘Let the desire tree of our playful eagerness grow!’ they said.

“Remembering how I grew My pearl tree, Namdimukhi said: ‘O sakhis, it was not by mantra that Mukunda could grow a pearl tree in clay soil.’ The gopis asked: ‘Then how could He do it then?’ Nandimukhi replied: ‘Because He has natural powers like that. What is the wonder that Kṛṣṇa can grow a pearl tree in an abode where the trees are made of coral, have sapphire leaves and buds of diamonds and pearls, and fruits of rubies, and other trees are golden? I’m sure that if you girls plant pearls and sprinkle on them even tastier fresh butter, you will grow even bigger pearl trees.’

“Drinking Nandinukhi’s sweet words with the cups of their ears, the gopis praised her and embraced her with great satisfaction. Then they happily returned home, took all the pearls they could find, planted them in a scarcely protected field and started sprinkling them three times a day with the best milk, butter and ghee. Hearing of their activities, Candravali and her group became greedy and envious, and they also planted many pearls, using all the pearls they could find in their homes and on their bodies. Then, after a few days, all the gopis were devestated in their pride when they found that thorny twigs had sprouted from their pearl seeds, and they became afraid that I would ridicule them.

“One day the adults found that all their pearls and milk products had disappeared from their homes, having ben used by their daughters for growing pearl trees, so they enquired from them. The older gopis said: ‘O old ones! Our girls have used them all for planting pearl trees. If they sprout we will gain great wealth, just like Kṛṣṇa did when He grew pearls in His field. They were suitable for great queens!’

“When Viśākha inspected the sprouts on the gopi’s fields she said: ‘O sakhis, I do not think that these sprouts are quite the same as Kṛṣṇa’s. We have protected our fields from the eyes of Kṛṣṇa’s friends, so I wonder what could have happened.’ When I heard from My friends that only thorns sprouted from the gopi’s fields, I went there, just for fun and said, slightly smiling: ‘O, I have heard that you have grown so many nice pearls. Since I am you best friend, will you give Me the first fruits of your harvest?’

“The gopis replied: ‘If we had really planted pearls, then why isn’t the whole of Vraja filled with pearl trees now?’ proudly denying their humiliation. I said: ‘Why are you giving up the vaiśya duties of charity and taking to miserliness?’ Then I lavishly decorated all my cows, calves, oxen, bullocks, goats and even all the monkeys with pearl ornaments. The gopis, being afraid of their parents’ anger over having lost all their wealth of pearls wondered what to do. They told each other: ‘It’s all Nandimukhi’s fault. The traitor has joined Kṛṣṇa’s side.’

“So they went there and severely chastised her, but Nandimukhi said: ‘ I swear to you, on all my penances that I did not deceive you. It is rather all your own fault!’ The gopis said: ‘Why?’ Nandimukhi said: ‘Because you made such a noise about planting these pearls that Kṛṣṇa’s friends have heard of it. Did you keep any guard around your fields?’ The girls admitted they had not.

“Nandimukhi angrily said: ‘These clever boys must have heard what you planted. Then that great deceiver, Kṛṣṇa, must have bribed them with sweet rice, especially the greedy ones like Madhumangala, who is easily bribed in such ways. Then they must have crept into your fields, taken all your pearls and planted seeds of thorny plants instead. Then they threw all the pearls into the Yamuna. I know this for sure!’

“Not satisfied with her explanation the girls all said: ‘O you greatest of cheaters, Nandimukhi. O crooked godsister of that clown Madhumangala. You’re just a Kali-yuga ascetic! Just wait!’ Coming back home again they considered once more what to do. Śrīmati Rādhārāni said: ‘Nandimukhi may have deceived us or not, but I’m very afraid of My parents. We can only pacify their anger if we can show them some pearls. We must make some deal with Kṛṣṇa.’

“The clever Candramukhi then took some gold as a price to pay Kṛṣṇa for some pearls, and said: ‘I will take Kancanalata with me and we will somehow buy some pearls from Kṛṣṇa.’ Taking the gold, they came to Kṛṣṇa’s pearl garden. When they saw Me sitting there with Subala, they told him: ‘O Subala, we have heard that you have grown fresh pearls. Take this gold in exchange for some of the most exquisite among them.’

“Then I said: ‘Once I came to you girls for pearls and you did not give Me any. You did not even give Me a milk-cup to sprinkle My pearl field. I would rather toss all My pearls into the Yamuna. You may even offer Me all your domestic belongings in exchange for them, but I will not give you even one pearl of Mine!’

“Then Kancalata and Candramukhi said: ‘How can we be saved from our parents’ anger now? It is too far to go to Mathura for pearls now. O Subala, please mediate for us. Tell us what price we must pay.’ Hearing this I said: ‘Well, I am very soft-hearted. I’m not so hard-hearted like you girls. I suppose I must let you buy some. But how will we determine an appropriate price?’

“Subala, taking the role of mediator, said: ‘So, my friend, how much do you want for them? I replied: ‘Look, Subala, these girls were sent by Rādhā and the others. They do not know that this gold is not sufficient for My pearls. Therefore, how can I negotiate a suitable price with them? Even though there are many cintāmani-stones in the golden basket-like breasts of Candramukhi, it is not sufficient. Even the Kaustubha gem which dwells on the chest of of the Lord of Vaikuntha cannot be one billionth part of the price of just one of My pearls!’

“Hearing this, Kancalata looked at Me angrily and, frowning, said: ‘O brainless Candramukhi, I should not have come with you to see this villain! I still came here on your request to get some pearls, but now I’m leaving.’ Candramukhi replied: ‘Kancalata, you are speaking the truth. I’m also going. How can I ascertain a price for these pearls alone.’

“When I saw them both leaving I said: ‘Subala, in this way we cannot ascertain a price for these pearls.’ Subala appealed to Candramukhi: ‘O sakhi, my friend will only discuss the price when all the gopis are here, like Rādhā and Lalita. They can come and take the desired amount of pearls. I will mediate.’ Thus Candramukhi and Kancalata returned to Rādhā and told Her with feigned anger all that had transpired.

“Then Śrīmati Rādhārāni, Lalita and all the sakhis came to the pearl garden, where Candramukhi told Subala: ‘Friend Subala, here we are. Let us in a friendly spirit ascertain a suitable price.’ Then Subala called me and explained everything. I came and asked: ‘Why has Rādhā not come personally. Tungavidya replied: ‘O Prince of Gokula, She is lovingly engaged in household duties by Jatila, unable to leave home.’

“Then Madhumangala secretly told Me that Rādhā was hiding close by, hearing everything we have said. So I told Tungavidya: ‘Doesn’t She want any pearls then?’ Tungavidya said: ‘We will take Her share of the pearls.’ I replied: ‘Viśākha is just like Rādhā, and Rādhā is just like Viśākha. Then Viśākha can pay for Rādhā also. But, anyone who does not come personally to get her pearls must pay four times the normal amount. This is my firm decision!’ Then I told Subala: ‘Bring the pearl box here and show them our pearls. You can take the smallest pearl out and give it to Viśākha for Śrīmati Rādhārāni. If she cannot pay then the same will go for her as for Rādhā (four times the regular amount). As long as Rādhā does not come I will keep Viśākha locked up in the prison house of the Madhavi kunja.’

“Then Madhumangala said: ‘Dear friend, even if You obstruct them, the other men’s wives are always able to escape.’ I replied: ‘I know that, but don’t worry, I know it is very improper to destroy the good name of housewives, but the scriptures also say: sva karyam uddharet prajñaḥ, kurvann api vigarhitam — wise men sometimes perform wicked acts, but in the process they always elevate themselves. And in the Saṁhitas it is said: ahare vyavahare ca lajjam api parityajet — while eating or doing business one should not feel ashamed. I will stay at the Madhavi kunja, remaining awake the whole night guarding my prisoners.’

“Hearing this Subala smiled and said: ‘O dear Puruṣottama, how long must Viśākha remain in anxiety?’ I replied: ‘As long as Rādhā has not personally come here to pay for Her pearls.’ Then Madhumangala said: ‘Friend, Śrīmati Rādhārāni is more expert than any other gopi, especially when it comes to runnin away, as You noticed when You tried to tax Her for carrying ghee over Govardhana Hill. You became bewildered by Her then and became overwhelmed by dizziness. I’m very worried the same thing will happen here.’

“Then I smiled and told Madhumangala in front of everyone: ‘Friend, you are uselessly worrying. I won’t become dizzy. And even if I do, then I will use Her left lotusstem-like arm as a pillow for My head, lie on He chest using My yellow cloth as a pillow. I will enjoy Myself having a loving discussion with Her about the price of pearls and in this way We will quickly pass through the night. Otherwise, I will enjoy with Her in My dream, keeping Her bound firmly on the dense darkness of My chest, as in a prison, holding Her hips tight with My hard, sapphire coloured, snake-like arms!’

“Hearing this everyone laughed. But Rādhā looked at Me and Viśākha from the corner of Her eyes and said: ‘Go on, go to Candrāvali’s kunja and stay there,’ chastising Me with a smile. Viśākha looked at Me in a crooked way and said: ‘O Villain, get out! Get out!’ Then she hid among the sakhis. Then they all told Subala: ‘Subala, give up your dirty tricks. If you still want to sell your pearls then show them to us and tell us a reasonable price, otherwise we will go home. We can also get pearls in Mathura if we want.

“Hearing this, Subala opened the pearl basket and showed them our pearls. Then he told Me: ‘Dear friend, it is only by Your mercy that You wish to deal with these girls at all. All their domestic wealth and their entire wealth of cows is not a sufficient price for even one of our pearls. So, be kind and give them some pearls for just a small price, or even just for free, forgetting your miserliness.’ I replied: ‘No, no, My friend. Our profession as vaiśyas is to do business. Now what can I do? But to take heed of your request I will be somewhat lenient in My price to them.’

“Subala laughed and said: ‘Well said my friend. Let them pick outl their favourite pearls and make a pile of them, and then you decide on the price.’ I thought hat was a very good idea. Subala said: ‘Please sell them the pearls at the price the humbly suggest.’ I wondered what they had said to him to make him suggest that. Subala then said: ‘They say they can get pearls in Mathura, but it would take them two days to get the pearls from there, and their parents are becoming more and more angry waiting for their lost pearls and ornaments to be returned. Therefore they gave up all shame and approached you here in the forest. They said that if You give them the pearls now they will pay you in a day or two, and that You should have faith in them as honest girls who are objects of Your love anyway. If you do so, Your affection for them will simply increase.’

Then I laughed and told Subala: ‘O, you are of very purified intellect, but you do not understand anything of their behaviour. They are all great experts in diplomatic trickery. As soon as they have received the pearls they will take them inside the great fortresses of their husbands’ homes, on the high mountains of the elders’ protection, then what will we do?’

“Subala replied: ‘They will not do that, my friend. And even if they do I will take them into the forest with the Arjuna trees and the blackbirds and I will embrace them and kiss them, drinking the nectar of their lips. When they tell their husbands about that I

will immediately come to their husbands and frighten them so they will come out and pay us the amount they owe us.'

"Hearing this, Madhumangala angrily said: 'O Subala, you are Subala (very strong) in name only. Actually you are just like a weak woman. Even is these girls just blow on you, you become scared! So what will happen if their husbands become angry with you?. But I will go with my army led by Vijaya to Nandīśvara and surround the whole place and they will be forced to come out of their houses personally and hand to me all their cows and buffalo to repay us!'

"Hearing this I became very sad and said: 'O Pranasakhe Madhumangala, all the Vrajavasis, including the Bhilas and Pulindas are dearer than the dearest to Me. These cowherdsmen are non-different from Me. It would be very improper to deal with them like that!'

"Subala then said: 'If that is the case, then why are you trying to do business with these gopis in such a way? The smṛti scriptures say that if you try to make a profit through doing business with your friends you will end up quarrelling and the relationship will be disturbed. So you should just give them some pearls in the way I have suggested.'

"Then the gopis said angrily: 'O most crooked Subala, you are just rying to cheat us as usual. You can live like a king with your pearls, but we're going home!' Then, as the gopis were leaving, Subala stopped them and humbly told Lalita: 'Sakhi Lalita! This kind of business dealing is damaging our affectionate relationship. Actually I am trying to help you by convincing Kṛṣṇa to allow you to have some pearls in this way, otherwise He wouldn't let you have any at all. So first work out a price and then you can worry about paying for them later.'

"Then the gopis turned to Me again and said: 'Friend, give up your jokes now and tell us Your price.' I replied: 'Subala, whose price should I work out first?' He replied: 'First decide on Lalita's price. She is the chief of all these girls.' I said: 'I will certainly work out a fair price for her, as if she should fight with Me, I would certainly be defeated. Even though I am a lion among men I would have to do whatever she says and let her have some pearls at her own price.'

"Subala smiled and said: 'O Hero of Gokula, why should you have to struggle with a weak girl like Lalita? With the lotusbud-like little finger of your left lotus hand You held up Govardhana Hill, which defeats the pride of Lord Śiva's mountain, for seven days and nights.' Madhumangala said: 'Friend, Kṛṣṇa did this in His pauganda age, but now He is sprinkled with the nectar of youth, which has caused the desire tree of Cupid to grow lakhs and lakhs of leaves on Him.'

"Subala asked: 'How is this, tell me?' Madhumangala expertly replied: 'He who defeated great demons in His youth is now being usurped by the mountain of Cupid.

Now He is being cut by the sharp nail-weapons of the gopis, being defeated in Cupid's great battle with them!'

"Then I laughed and said: 'Subala, he's right! Unlike before, I am now always stunned by Śrīmati Rādhārāni's eyebrows, that twang like Cupid's bow, and by Her anger and neglect. How can you call such girls abalaḥ (weak)?' Hearing this, Lalita smiled, hiding her bliss, and said with mock anger: 'O Subala, you clown. Why don't you worship the goddess of Bhandiravana, Candrāvali, with Madhumangala and the cheat of Gokula, Kṛṣṇa? You truly must have worshipped her, since you have got her mercy in being expert at cheating!'

"Then Nandimukhi, who had just come from visiting Mother Paurnamasi, came with a message from the saintly lady. The message said: 'O Lalita, stop your joking with Vrajendranandana. Try to be well behaved, as is recommended in the scriptures. Through all this joking you will never come to an agreement with this boy. And You, O Prince of Gokula, please accept what I am about to tell You.'

"Excited, I said: 'Nandimukhi! Please shower Me with the nectar of the saintly mother Paurnamasi's order!' Nandimukhi said: 'Rādhā and the maidens of Vraja are the objects of Purnamasi's great affection, and she is also very attached to You. She wants You to give up Your fanaticism and settle for whatever Śrīmati Rādhārāni can give You. You, being the son of the most wealthy King of Vraja, should satisfy Her with whatever You can give. Thus You shall be known as the giver of bliss to the whole of Gokula.'

"I proudly replied: 'Previous to this, I received a flower-like order from the holy mother through the hands of Subala, saying that I should settle everything with Lalita, leaving aside dealings with the other gopis.' Everyone then smiled and looked at Lalita's angry frowning eyebrows and trmbling lips. Nandimukhi smiled and said: 'O Prince of Vraja, I heard this also. Now give up Your jokes and ascertain the right price for everyone.'

"Then I said: 'So you tell me what price I should set for this girl Jyeṣtha.' Nandimukhi said: 'The Lord of Wealth should be first to suggest a price.' I said: 'The moon in the stellar path of My heart is usually surrounded by the Rādhā and Anurādhā (Lalita) stars, but now Jyeṣtha (another star or gopi) has now come between them. I must embrace her now also.' Rādhā, Viśākha and Lalita feigned anger and I said: 'Nandimukhi, why are they angry while hearing about great things to be gained?'

"She replied: 'Beautiful one, they are angry because to kiss the Śyāma-moon from Gokula, or to touch Him, or even to see Him from a distance will destroy their chastity.'"

Hearing these pleasing stories, Satyabhāma said: "O Lord, why were Lalita, Rādhā and Viśākha angry when they heard You speaking anbut the stars with these names as a joke?"

Kṛṣṇa replied: “Dearest, because I turned the meanings of the names around, since Anurādhā means Lalita.”

Satyabhāma said: “O Yadavendra. My mind cannot be satisfied after hearing these ambrosial stories. Tell me more! Tell me more!”

Kṛṣṇa said: “Then I smiled and, looking at Campakalata’s moonlike face, I moved My hands and said: ‘Nandimukhi, I have been wondering for many days how Campakalata attained perfection.’ Nandimukhi replied: ‘What did You think the reason is?’ I said: ‘Because a campaka vine is generally immobile, but this vine moves. Not only that, but she carries two big fruits on her. May this campaka vine scent My chest, hanging around it with her abundant fragrance. On the strngth of My own perfection I will hang around her neck along with her emerald necklace as a bluish sapphire necklace, in between her breasts.’

“Subala said: ‘I can see what perfection Campakalata has achieved, but what perfection do you have?’ I replied: ‘Friend, what can I do, even though you look for My perfection you cannot see it.’ Nandimukhi then said: ‘O sweet-formed one, we are all eager to hear what kind of perfection You have achieved, and when you achieved it and how and where.’ I said: ‘One day, when My family went on pilgrimage to Ambikavana near Mathura, I released My father from the grip of a python. On the mere touch of my toe this python became a beautifully decorated Vidyādhara. I held up Govardhana Hill for seven days with just the finger of one hand, and by My mere glance I revived Subala and the other cowherdboys from the poisonous bite of Kaliya. I saved you all from blazing forestfires! Who is there in Gokula who can estimate My powers?”

“Hearing this, Lalita smiled and said: ‘Nandimukhi, this is all true, but since Kṛṣṇa fell down from celibacy, all these perfections have been lost. It’s all the fault of Govardhana Malla’s wife, Candravali and her friends Padma and Śaibya. They have enjoyed with Him.’

“Hearing this, I smiled and relied to her: ‘tejīyasāṁ na doṣāya, vahneḥ sarva-bhujo yathā (SB 10.33.29) — ‘Just as the fire is never polluted by eating or soncuming anything dirty, rather it become stronger from it, similarly the Lords of the universe are never contaminated by performing some worldly impioous act. Therefore My perfection remains even though I’m always enjoying sweet pastimes with the girls of Vraja. Rather, My perfection shines even more brightly through it!’

“Madhumangala said: ‘Lalite, He speaks the truth, otherwise how could Kṛṣṇa grow pearls out of the soil?’ She laughed and said: ‘O friend, how is that on the strength of Kṛṣṇa’s mystic perfection?’ He replied: ‘If it were not so, then how did it happen?’ She said: ‘It’s just because of Vṛndāvana’s own soil.’ I replied: ‘Then why could you girls only grow thron twigs with the same seeds in the same soil?’ But she contended that perhaps they had chosen some ground with bad soil.

“Then Śrīmati Rādhārāni said: ‘But sakhi Lalite, Viśakha said also that oour soil was good.’ Nandimukhi said: ‘Yes Lalite, Viśakha spoke the truth.’ Lalita wondered how that was, and Nandimukhi continued: ‘How can pearls not grow from soil where the fancyvines of loving devotion are sprinkled with the nectar of love? In this land of Vṛndāvana everyone is certainly a devotee.

“Lalita smiled and said: ‘Still, Viśakha, then how can a debauchee attached to female association still live on such sacred soil? Tell me.’ Viśakha replied: ‘Even advanced yogis fall down, what to speak of the neophytes. Even liberated souls fall down when they hear the wicked flute of this womanizer, and they take birth from the wombs of earthly people, again bound up by the ropes of material existence.

“I replied: ‘Viśakhe, you have spoken very well.’ Subala asked Me why I thought that, and I told him: ‘Even the sages in the Dandaka forest who were adept in severe austerities and who were liberated souls, took birth in Gokula after becoming attracted to Me through hearing about My cleverness, beauty and loving affairs, hearing these stories from the mouth of Narada Muni. Now they are enjoying the garland on My chest here in Vṛndāvana, becoming absorbed in My loving pastimes. Apart from them, many other liberated souls, becoming attracted to My inconceivable qualities, have taken birth in Vraja as birds, animals and trees and all types of mobile and immobile entities, relishing My sweet pastimes in ecstasy.’

“Subala said: ‘Friend, You have described it well.’ Lalita then said, slightly smiling: ‘If all the liberated souls come down to earth to take birth here, then why does such a most perfect soul as Yourself quarrel about a little wealth like this?’ I replied: ‘O foolish Lalite! Because you girls are so proud of the wealth of your youthful beauty, you have given up all religious principles and are wandering around here and there. But what would happen if I, the son of the virtuous King of Vraja, would give up the pious profession of vaiśyas — agriculture, cow protection, trade and banking? Even if one practices one of these four professions one attains perfection in vaiśya-dharma. Then, what to speak of Myself, who am practicing all four of them?’

Nandimukhi smiled and said: ‘O Prince who is fixed in His profession. I can see that You are practicing agriculture, cow protection and trading, but what about banking, in which one makes profit through charging interest?’ I replied: ‘Nandimuhki, don’t you know how we do that? I have already started making profit from the great scarcity of pearls in Vraja!’

“Viśakha said, slightly smiling: ‘O Subala, your friend is still praising Himself, glorifying the beauty of His religious adherence, even though His activities are quite deplorable. This is very improper.’ Subala said: ‘My friend is not just out for His own profit, but also for the increased wealth of everyone.’ Nandimukhi did not believe that and demanded to know that was so. Subala replied: ‘He gives everyone the restless glances from the corners of His eyes, which defeat the movments of lotuses, and

millions of fresh young Cupids are defeated by His youthful beauty. His speech is like a poind full of the essence of nectar.'

"Madhumangala added: 'Subala, my friend, you have forgotten all the other items with which He increases everyone's wealth.' Excited, Subala asked Madhumangala to remind him of those things, so Madhumangala continued: 'His capricorn-earrings, jewelled anklebells, necklaces, armlets, bracelets and rings, as well as His most beautiful and sweet loving playfulness.'

"Lalita responded: 'O revered one! Why do you fail to mention another of the ways He benefits others?' He distributes the remnants of the nectar from His lips to the chaste cowherd girls.' Śrīmati Rādhārāni said: 'Lalite! Truly, along with giving the elixir of this nectar to drink, He also distributes His two arms that defeat the pride of the round sapphire bolts of gates. His chest defeats an emerald door, and His hips defeat piles of emeralds. His face defeats the pride of the sweetness of billions of autumn moons, His lotus feet defeat, that are sweeter than fresh leaves, His beautiful body, whose elegance is sweeter than blue lotuses and the sapphire, and with His sweet, soft speech He produces flower-scented words. His mouth also smiles very sweetly.'

"Madhumangala then spoke to Me: 'Friend, You are very bold in using sweet words out of greed to taste the sweet lips of others' wives, and You speak many words to them, but the harsh Jatila will not give You the price for these pearls. As a friend I am speaking to You for Your benefit, please don't doubt me.

"I replied to him: 'Friend, you are speaking like this because you don't know the great price Śrīmati Rādhārāni and these housewives of Vraja can pay Me. They greatly satisfy Me by giving Me the nectar of their lips. For the two ruby-red lines I make on their chests every morning with My fingernails, they repay Me fourfold in the evening! Lalita repays Me with jewel-like kisses that flow like a stream of nectar, and also with her quarrelling, and Viśakha also repays Me the nectar of My lips threefold in the evening. Campaklata and the other girls repay Me either twofold or threefold, although there is one exception. Rangamala only repays Me once when I touch her breasts. Also her friend Tulasi does not repay Me properly when I embrace her vine-like body.'

Madhumangala expressed great concern when he heard this: 'Ayi! Rangamala and Tulasi, have you no fear of religious principles? You cannot even repay my innocent friend after He gives you all these divine gifts? You are very cunning and ungrateful!'"